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A P L E A F O R M O D E R A T I O N

**Based upon Observations
of an American Woman
in a Belligerent Country**

B Y A N N I E L E M P K O N T A



WILLIAM THE SECOND

A PLEA FOR MODERATION

Based upon Observations of an American
Woman in a Belligerent Country

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At the outbreak of hostilities, I thought it beyond human comprehension that after centuries of civilization, millions and millions of men should stand lined against each other in what was to be the fiercest fight the world has ever seen. I felt the hopelessness of human striving, until in the midst of a belligerent nation, I saw and felt that nation's exaltation. It was good to have lived if for that alone.

Must we, in our present state of civilization, look to war and pay its price for a vision of the high destiny of man?

U. OF C.
MAR 15 1915

A Plea for Moderation

I confess to a feeling of keen disappointment at the unwillingness of the larger part of the anti-German majority in this country to display any semblance of charitable feelings for the object of their antipathy. It is my hope, rather than the purpose of these words, that a feeling of sympathy at least shall be engendered toward all the combatants. If indeed the present conflict is to be considered an occasion when the propaganda of universal peace can be most opportunely and optimistically advanced, it is surely unfortunate to discern a feeling of bitterness against an important nation, a nation that must be included in any scheme so comprehensive. It can not be part of this movement to contemplate the destruction of a nation that has been among the most progressive in peaceful pursuits, merely because it has at the same time best developed its military organization.

That Germany has been a progressive nation and a useful one, no one will deny, and there is a large number of anti-Germans who profess friendly feelings for the German people, but swear deadly hatred against the Kaiser and the war party. Any attempt to point out that the German nation is the war party is summarily dismissed and any phenomenon of that nature is attributed to the first blast of enthusiasm of a people facing a great crisis, encouraged by deliberate deception on the part of officialdom. Nevertheless there is little concrete evidence of such friendliness, and the attitude is open to the suspicion of being a veneer for deep-rooted antipathy against the whole nation.

It is not my intention to prepare a brief for the Germans, however strongly my sympathies may impel me. Much has been written convincingly on both sides—but in every case there are premises which are founded up on assumption or links in the chain of reasoning which are not established upon fact. However uncertain the outcome of the war, one thing is certain and that is that when it does

end, there will be a great effort on the part of those concerned, to present every item of their respective cases with the utmost force and fortified with every possible proof. There will be an accumulation of evidence much of which has not yet been bared and, which is still more important, there will be the possibility of a perspective not now existing. Then if ever, whether belligerents or neutrals fix the terms of peace, the concentration and sifting of able minds will approximate a judgment now impossible to formulate, fastening upon one or the other of the belligerent groups a preponderance of responsibility—for is there any of us that will tolerate a pharisaical attitude in either of them?

As I learned upon my recent return to this country, perhaps the chief reasons given for the intense antipathy to Germany is traceable to two circumstances made much of during the beginning of hostilities, the violation of the neutrality of Belgium, and the commission of atrocities upon its inhabitants.

As I shall attempt to explain a little further on, these and kindred matters were presented to me in so totally different a light, that it was difficult for me to comprehend the view-point existing in this country. I shall not attempt to convince nor persuade any one to adopt the view-point which appealed to me as the just one, by reason of German surroundings and influences, but to intimate that questions that can so earnestly be answered in opposite ways, should surely not be too hastily answered to the everlasting detriment of a large and heretofore peaceful and industrious people. However we may hate the Germans, we know that our population has drawn on them heavily, and, it cannot be denied, profitably. If the American people is to judge, and judge it must, let it not judge hastily. A judge will not pass judgment after hearing one side, unless there is but one side. And his determination that there is but one side, must not be founded on assumption. So let the American people reserve judgment, bearing in mind the German earnestness and conviction of righteousness no less strong than that of its opponents. Until that time let us encour-

age some degree of sympathy for the feelings and actions of the Germans, so that when the time for judging them arrives, we may not have prejudged.

It is evident that I have become imbued with the German point of view and lest that be taken as a token disqualifying me from judgment, or seeking to guide the determination of judges, let me outline the circumstances and experiences which impressed me.

It is significant to my mind that the Americans who have been in Germany since the outbreak of the war, have without exception, to my knowledge, shown strong sympathies for the Germans and their cause. The repeated and insistent tales of contemptible outrages practised upon Americans in Germany at the outbreak of the war have been proven false or grossly overdrawn without exception, although they were accepted in this country. In fact the Germans find their ablest champions in these people. An intimate view of a person will often prove the most effective means of dissipating slander, and I am convinced that an intimate view of the German people during their present crisis, would go further in nullifying the effects of a blind acceptance of the slanders of the English newspapers, than argument upon argument.

As in the case of many other Americans my presence in the midst of the European crisis was an unexpected incident of a European pleasure trip. With a love for quiet emphasized by my residence a greater portion of the year in the bustle of New York, I repaired this summer, as in past summers, to the altitude and restfulness of the Engadine. There in the quiet walks upon the slopes of wooded mountains, with the lakes far below, and the vista of the upper and lower Engadine stretching out before me, I have learned most deeply to appreciate Goethe's truism—*Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh*. But the force of this truism was rudely shattered. With the first news of the approaching Storm of the Nations, came a fever of frenzied excitement, consternation, and hurried departures among the visitors of St. Moritz.

In that spot there is always to be found a very cosmopolitan crowd, and after the excitement of the early departures had subsided, the remaining guests were left to little else than a discussion pro and con of the causes of the conflict and an analysis of events. It was interesting to listen to the comments and arguments called forth by the appearance of telegrams twice daily, giving the reports from different sources of the progress of the war. Although there was a sprinkling of all nations, and heated arguments ensued, the venom that I have since discovered, and can still discover in the English and American papers was not disclosed. I do not wish to claim a peculiar virtue for our small gathering, but we did not accept with finality the wild suppositions and fabrications of excited minds, which were purveyed to us in profusion.

More serious matters were more seriously discussed. The marching of the German troops through Belgium, while regarded as a terrible expedient, was not presented to us as the commission of frivolous crime or the deliberate violation of treaty. People generally were cognizant of the diplomatic differences and Gladstone's opinion regarding the treaty of 1839—a treaty guaranteeing the neutrality of Belgium to which Great Britain, France, Austria, Russia, Prussia, and the German Confederation were parties. In 1866, the German Confederation had been dissolved by the war between Prussia and Austria, and in 1867 the North German Union was founded with Prussia as its largest state. At the beginning of the Franco-Prussian War, in 1870, Great Britain, the power most interested in the maintenance of Belgian neutrality, was confirmed by the opinion of Gladstone, then Prime-Minister, in the apprehension that the changes of government of the German Confederation had abrogated the guaranty of the treaty. In consequence Great Britain obtained new treaties from the French government and from the North German Union, guaranteeing the neutrality of Belgium during the period of the war, and for one year from the date of its termination. This treaty expired in 1872.

It was not contended that a treaty was necessary to protect the neutrality of a nation, or that in its absence,

its neutrality need not be respected, but it was recognized that Germany was to be set upon on all sides, and that if her most obvious salvation lay in going through Belgium, dire necessity was her excuse.

Then followed a period when the first American papers arrived, with evident perversions of occurrences through English channels. Announcements in the Swiss papers of the internment of several hundred French soldiers who had crossed over into Swiss territory, became a German invasion of Switzerland. Other headlines informed us of matters that were not even perversions of fact, but fabrication. Thus we learned that the Germans were in full retreat everywhere, that the Frankfort station was in ashes, that the city had been stormed by the enemy. The papers spoke with assurance, but the forty-two centimeter howitzers were at the same time reducing the fortresses in Belgium. Our newspapers like the proverbial sheep of Panurge, faithfully followed the leadership of England's mighty newspaper chieftain. As Napoleon said of Metternich: "*Il ment. Il faut mentir quelquefois, mais mentir tout le temps, c'est trop.*"

During this time, so anxious for all Switzerland, remarkable solicitude was shown the guests at the Kulm and the Palace hotels at St. Moritz. With rumors of international complications, and food and coal shortage, American checks and even mere verbal promises were accepted in payment of bills, but nevertheless, almost panic-stricken, many people risked leaving this haven for the discomforts and dangers always attending mobilization.

After the mobilization was practically over, I decided to go to Germany to offer my services to the Red Cross. I took the route via Zurich and Romanshorn, crossing Lake Constance to Lindau, the frontier town of Germany. Landed at Lindau, I was met by the custom officials with the utmost courtesy. My passports and my baggage were examined and I took the train for Munich, arriving on schedule time, with my trunks, still on a peace footing, both as to size and number, in good order.

It was very different nevertheless, than on former visits, for the state of war was strikingly reflected, not only by the earnestness and enthusiasm of the people, but also by a succession of sights never to be forgotten. At the frontier, a Red Cross Station with wounded soldiers from the West, was the first tangible evidence of the gigantic struggle that had begun, evidence that was to be multiplied in unceasing succession. Soldiers were everywhere. At all stations, women were standing with great pots of hot soup and coffee for the soldiers. At Munich I saw train after train filled with them, pull out of the station, to be replaced by hospital trains, as if on schedule. On one occasion when a train load of wounded soldiers arrived, it was found necessary to operate five men without delay, which was done in the operating room on the train. The street tram cars were brought into requisition as a means of transportation for the wounded. I often saw twelve cars, together with beds, on which were lying the wounded soldiers, attended by Red Cross men-nurses in white uniforms.

And yet to my amazement, I found that in Munich as well as in the other German cities I visited, Frankfort, Wiesbaden, Cologne, Dusseldorf, Duisburg, there was no lack of able-bodied men to consummate the work in the banks, business houses, public service, and even in the factories and public parks. The operas and theaters were playing patriotic plays and were well attended as were also the concerts. The streets were cleaned and the parks tended as of old. The grass was cut, the bushes trimmed and in the fields the harvests were gathered in. The spirit of determination and sacrifice was evident in every one.

After spending several days in visiting the hospitals, I left Munich for Wiesbaden which had been transformed into the hospital city par excellence of Germany. There I had the good fortune to be introduced to the heads of the various Hospitals, the Stiften or Foundations, the Red Cross, and the private Lazaretten. One of the finest

of the latter class is under the auspices of the Baronin von der Goltz, the head of whose house is Baron von der Goltz, until recently Governor of Belgium. She wears the nurses costume and personally attends the wounded. It was in this hospital that I first saw a dum-dum bullet and evidence of its ghastly work. One soldier, a fine looking Teuton, had both arms bandaged and when the bandages were removed, I saw the small wound made by the bullet on entering the left arm, leaving a larger jagged wound as it passed out. The same bullet practically shattered the right arm. In the Paulinen Stift, under the patronage of the Princess von Schaumburg-Lippe, I saw some astounding results of the modern method of treating surgical cases, without resorting to amputation.

I spoke to some four or five hundred wounded soldiers and officers and heard tales of awful atrocities committed by the Belgians. The tales of devilish work of the Franc-tireur are too horrible to repeat. They were told earnestly and by men not in trifling mood. I believed them, for the German from my observation is not given to lying, and I could not help recalling the much aired atrocities of the Belgians in the Congo Free State.

Two days before the bombardment of Rheims, I read a German proclamation to the French, announcing the bombardment in conformance with the agreements of the Hague Conference, and warning the people not to use the Cathedral for military purposes, as the Germans wished to spare the structure. The Cathedral was injured in the bombardment, and the Germans condemned more severely by some people, than for any other of their deeds. And yet, I do not believe that any European would wantonly despoil any work of art, for all Europeans, from the crowned head to the workman, love art. And if works of art are not used for military purposes, no European will destroy them. We cannot say as much for ourselves. Some of us, no doubt love the beautiful, but we allow our greatest works of nature to be defaced beyond recognition, for the immediate selfish ends of the few.

Fraternity, loyalty, self-obliteration are the words which come to my mind as most accurately describing the German Nation to-day, in this their fight for existence. Prince and soldier fight side by side, and at home the women are one large army of self-sacrificing untiring workers. Whatever its faults may be, and I have not been slow to find them heretofore, they are lost to view in the nation's present achievements, for to-day she stands out grandly possessed of a supreme degree of courage.

We will never understand the military spirit with which every German man, woman and child is imbued, unless we remember that for centuries and centuries, it has been inherent in the people. In their earliest poetry, we find that they believed in an after life of martial character. The heroes who fell in battle were the honored ones and went to Walhall, where they gathered about Walvater, whilst those who died the "Strohtod" (literally straw death i. e. on their beds) had to live with Hel, the ruler of the lower world.

After the German people embraced Christianity, they still had to fight for their existence. And it must not be forgotten that this fighting spirit of the German people saved Europe from decadent Rome, and that this same spirit in the troops led by old "Marshall Vorwaerts," saved the English from defeat at Waterloo.

Knowing well the enthusiasm often attaining exaltation of our own people's patriotism, I venture to say, that were we surrounded on all sides by nations inimical to us, our military spirit would develop with surprising vigor and rapidity at the first intimation of hostilities. How many have these intimations been of which Germany was forced to take cognizance?

The Germans hold that our criticism of their militarism is a fallacy, and that we might as well denounce England for the maintenance of her powerful navy, for England would still be a power without her navy.

It seems incredible that circumstances should be judged without a knowledge of conditions, or even of simple history. I have been told by an Englishman that the

Germans were descended from the Vandals and the Goths. And this man was in the British Consular service. The Vandals and Goth (East German tribes), history tells us were splendid tribes who unfortunately perished in the wars of the Voelkerwanderung. The West German tribes, the Franks, Suebi, Alemanni, Saxons, etc., settled in middle Europe, in its earliest history, and were the progenitors of the present German people. Their destiny became the history of Germany, except for the Angels, a branch of the Saxons, who in the fifth century crossed to England (Angle-Land) and there founded a kingdom whose history is England's.

I have many times been told that Germany ought to give back Alsace-Lorraine to France as it belonged to her first. Alsace-Lorraine was part of the land originally occupied just after the migration of the Nations (4th—6th centuries) by German tribes, land which extended from the Elbe to the heart of the France of to-day. In fact the German tribes had settled as early as 72 B.C. in what is now known as Alsace. Not until 1648, was a portion of Alsace ceded to France. In 1678 Louis XIV began a series of systematical robberies of German towns and lands. He established "Chambres of Reunion" to give a semblance of legality to these proceedings, which ended in the seizure of the remaining portion of Alsace in 1681. After the Revolution of 1789 all that land now called Alsace-Lorraine was acquired by France. In 1870, the Germans recaptured it.

I heard a German statesman laugh heartily when he was told that the Kaiser was another Napoleon. "Surely," he said, "a second Napoleon would not be so unnapoleonic as to wait with the conquest of the world until he was long past middle age, nor would he, with such proclivities, have kept peace for twenty-six years. No other civilized country can boast a peace of forty-four years as Germany can."

With all her military spirit, I believe Germany is to-day the most democratic and the most progressive country in the world. And Wilhelm II Rex, Imperator, is the most

democratic and progressive ruler. There is not a question, problem, or institution in all Germany with which he is not fully acquainted. He as his fathers before him, lives in a very unostentatious manner. His castles are all quite plain, and cannot be compared to some of our private palaces on Fifth Avenue, much less to the splendors of those of Russia. Nor has he a private factory, as I have seen in Russia, where the rarest malachite and lapis-lazuli, and bushel baskets of rubies and sapphires and emeralds are stored for the Czar's pleasure, whilst his subjects, many of them half starved, are driven by the knout to do his will.

The Kaiser is the most versatile and the strongest personality in the world to-day. His complete conversion of the Social Democrats, an incorruptible body of men, who stand for the strongest and best principles of Social Democracy, and who would tolerate no vainglorious reasons for war, proves the conviction and earnestness of his purpose.

Volk und Knecht und Ueberwinder
Sie gestehen zu jeder Zeit
Hoechstes Glueck der Erdenkinder,
Sei nur die Persoenlichkeit.

This man with the piercing blue-grey eyes, eyes with the power to will, has led his country to a position almost half a century ahead of any other nation. Her progress has been almost miraculous. Her civic institutions are in a perfected state, so much so, that England herself has sent men to Germany to study them. She leads in science, art and learning. Everywhere throughout the land, there is the same clean aspect of the towns, and the same order and cleanliness of the people, a spirit of enterprise, and an efficiency of the public service. The absence of drunkenness is noticeable, without restrictive laws regarding the sale of liquor, or the closing time of restaurants and cafes.

The life of the people is freer and richer than with us. There are the great public squares and parks, with their wonderful orchestras, military, classic, and popular mu-

sic, to please every taste or mood. The great possibilities of education and self-culture, open to all people, the high character of their theaters (you will always find Shakespeare and the French classicists, as well as the finest German dramas in their repertory), and the many forms of popular recreation, are opportunities open to high and low, rich and poor. There are no people suffering from hunger and cold, or neglected old age. Her system of Workmen's compensation and insurance has become the model which other nations have in vain striven to emulate. For this purpose the government has devoted annually over two hundred million dollars.

The cruel shame of letting humanity live and reproduce in filthy and crowded tenement houses is unknown. They do not commit the crime of letting children grow up in filthy streets, forever breathing the polluted atmosphere of filth and disease, and never having a glimpse of nature's beauties. Every individual is entitled to an existence and he gets it.

Und das heilige Menschenrecht
Gilt dem Herren wie dem Knecht.

I have heard objections to the paternalism of the German government, but as all government implies paternalism, and as we are not good enough to govern ourselves, it seems infinitely better for a government to take care of its suffering people, than to have a handful of private individuals spasmodically hurl charity and philanthropy, at their heads. The words charity, except in the biblical sense—love—and philanthropy, which never has and never will warm the heart, ought to fall into desuetude.

Not only are the Germans human beings, but persons who do things so well, that we must have an uncomfortable suspicion that they do things better than we do. "There is no virtue so truly great and godlike as justice," and I can not but feel, that we, who claim a high endowment of that greatest of virtues, are doing ourselves a grave injury by summarily condemning a nation without an appreciation of its case.

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